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Jesus asking if he were the Messiah. John in his prison cell was in a prison mood and had fallen into doubt on this fundamental point; yet Jesus did not return him a dogmatic answer, settling the question for him, but he sent additional facts, more light, to John and told him to think the problem through for himself. God has given us plenty of facts, abundance of light, in this tangled and dark world, for us to find the way of truth and duty, but we must work out

the problem of what truth is for ourselves. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." There is no other way. And as we walk this way, often in difficulty and perplexity, we shall find that it follows him who said, "I am the truth," and that it issues in the presence of God, who is light, the supreme Source and Authority of all truth and right. In following this path we shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

APPLYING MYSTICISM IN THE CHURCHES

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Intellectualism is the bane of religion. We always fail when we try to think our religion instead of living it. Mysticism is the contrary of intellectualism, and sometimes its rival. It ought to be brought into fellowship with our rational thinking and utilized in the interest of our developing thinking.

At present mysticism, while gaining general recognition as a valuable part of religion, is applied to life (in an organized way) only by certain of the new cults known as Christian Science, New Thought, and the like, and by the Quakers, who represent the element of quietism. But if the churches could make these applications themselves, they not only would hold many who are now drifting away into various forms of extra-church mysticism, but would strengthen themselves to meet sympathetically the present growing interest in what pertains to the world of the unseen; for this, while possibly not a

religious interest, takes hold of people who are seeking, perhaps unconsciously, a real religion of faith.

If the churches could bring themselves to grant the hypothesis that every good thing belongs by right to the child of God—the citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven—the next step would be easy: "How shall we obtain these good things for ourselves?" They could then observe the working methods of the new cults, not to copy but to improve on them.

However, there are certain obstacles in the way of the acceptance by the churches of the ideal of a realization of

all good things in this life through God. One of them is a certain interpretation of the words "Thy will be done." They occur most prominently of course in the Lord's Prayer, and it is passing strange that, with their context, people should ever have thought of them as counseling a patient acceptance of misfortune; they clearly refer to the coming of that Kingdom of Heaven when sickness, sorrow (in the sense of a disease of the heart), and poverty (in the sense of a disease of society) shall be done away. These words occur also in the story of Gethsemane, of course, a story which pictures the eternal struggle between the higher and the lower choice—the substitution of the higher, more social, wish for the lower, more personal, one, and not resignation, surely, to some evil impossible to prevent. This is simply fatalism. To say these words over the graves of the dead, vanquished in the battle of life by many causes working not at all in conformance with God's will, or to say them about the misfortunes of life, whose causes are deeply rooted in ourselves, or at the furthest in some human being like ourselves, seems a most irreverent proceeding when you come to think of it.

Perhaps the worst result of the traditional interpretation of these words has been the fact that so many men—the average type of American business men—have been kept out of active, actual sympathy with religion by them. Their lives, as business men, are built up on the principle that, to win, you take a goal and then work till you win it. They allow no doubts to enter their minds about achieving this goal, but keep them concentrated and fixed on the ultimate

end. If they allowed themselves to think, for instance, "Does God intend me to complete this railroad?" at a time when everything seems to be against them, they would have to put themselves down as failures at once. That thought is treason to the concentrated mind.

They instinctively perceive that to have everything hazy—everything dependent on the will of somebody about which or whom you know absolutely nothing—makes ducks and drakes of the powers of achievement. Right or wrong, this unfaltering determination to win out, in spite of God or devil, is characteristic of America at her best, and is the state of mind which has made her foremost in business among the nations. Thus strong-willed people, successful and determined characters, often put their religion safely by in that corner of their minds where they store their sentimental keepsakes—memories of their first loves, the dead boy, the mother of their youth—to be taken out when slow music plays and the stained-glass windows shed a mild light. But the next morning in the office, when the will is fully nerved and the sentimental corner shut up again, what place is there for a religion which takes away the security of the rewards of effort and substitutes uncertainty for at least the chances of fortune? To be sure, this interpretation is not always prominent; it is virtually disregarded in practice by many clear-seeing people; but there it stands in theory, a drag upon progress till definitely overturned by common consent.

Another obstacle to the acceptance of the doctrine of the realization of life's

good things is the recognition by everybody of the value of suffering in the building of character. We all know people whose characters have seemingly been remade in the fires of suffering. But let us ask ourselves this question, looking back over our own experiences, or those of our intimate friends: "Are the values gained so much the result of the suffering as of the efforts which we made in consequence of it—efforts toward self-conquest, toward a larger, less personal life, toward purification of our lower selves?" If it were a law of the spiritual world that suffering perfects character, then it would always do it, whereas we know perfectly well that it does not always do it. A large proportion of those who suffer gain nothing by it. They emerge about the same as they were before, ready to live the same life (except from fear of certain consequences) or they go under in health and morals. Surely there are as many unsaintly invalids as saintly! All that is gained is gained by our own effort it seems—effort which might surely be undertaken without our being driven to it by the fires of suffering. "Experience is a hard school, but fools can learn in no other"—that is, without sufficient incentive.

The mystic's position is that the voluntary undertaking of a certain inward discipline puts one out of the way of encountering many of the disagreeable experiences of life just in so far as we are thorough in our acceptance and practice of it. Truly the religious man may have his eye fixed on the bright rewards of the spirit and not on escaping the disagreeables, but, as a starter, the average man finds the motive of getting

rid of the evils of pain, suffering, and poverty very satisfying; and one may rest assured that ere long the rewards, the great positive values, which he is gaining will begin to make a stronger appeal to him than all the evils which he is escaping. The Great Teacher, that master-psychologist, did not disdain the appeal to so-called "lower" motives in his preaching, but recognized clearly that plain men and women must begin right where they are to climb.

The new cults have happened upon this idea and in their crude way are attempting to put it before the world. However we may criticize their methods of presentation, they get results which are startling and which prove that their bit of truth is genuine.

Every reasonable person is surely seeking a way to make his life count and to avoid those terrible accidents which seem to "slit our thin-spun lives" just when we are getting along nicely. He will do anything within reason to avoid these things. Perhaps he no longer thinks of them as God-sent—the new cult's wide preaching to the contrary has leavened general thought to a considerable extent, and even many theologians and very orthodox preachers realize fully that the origin of evil may not be concerned with God at all, nor sent by him for our good in any manner whatever. He may be quite ready, theoretically, to take the next step of ridding himself from these evils if he could do so without stultifying himself. Yes, he will, in short, do or think anything in reason, but he declines to do or think anything out of reason to gain these desirable ends, for in so doing he sacrifices what is to him more precious

than health, success, or happiness—his own mental honesty. Any doctrine which requires the sacrifice of that must have, he thinks, something wrong somewhere, though he may not be enough of a metaphysician to confute the arguments offered in its support.

The new-cult way of freeing one's self from the difficulties of life seems to him inconsistent with the Christianity which he learned at his mother's knee in bygone days (before the days when mothers' knees were more prominent on the golf links than in the nursery at the twilight hour), or in Sunday school, or from the pulpit in the church which he is in the habit of attending when the weather is fine but not too fine. Besides, the whole thing seems so absolutely unreasonable. Why should thinking certain metaphysical thoughts couched in terms as unfamiliar to him as Sanscrit take away his liver trouble? Between the two he lets it all go and, on the whole, offers very acceptable incense on the shrine of his own moral rectitude.

But what is this "Way" proposed by the mystic which leads him into green pastures? It is not the esoteric "Way" of the theosophist, leading through successive incarnations to peace; neither is it the elaborate "Way" proposed by many mystical writers—the way of purgation, purification, and illumination. This is truly a great way, but only for the great. The way here spoken of is that not only trodden but personified by the Founder of our religion, which begins in faith and humility and service and leads shortly and here and now straight to the Kingdom of Heaven, first as to the individual, then as to his surroundings, then as to society. It may

be somewhat narrow, but, as has been intimated from a high source, the traveler will not find it overcrowded. It has signposts all along it, and it is well lighted and warmed. One seer of old said of this particular highway that it was so simple that even the wayfaring man, though a fool, could not mistake it. That seems the kind of a way we want!

Suppose then that the church can direct us how to find and follow this way, not disdaining our present human needs, but pointing out the greater glories too—how then shall we, in our need, and the church in its intention, come together, practically?

First, what do we mean by the words "the church"? Do we mean that group of real leaders of thought and spirituality who, whether in places of power and recognition or in obscure villages, think humbly and straight—see the unseen things with eyes which have, perhaps, been washed clear by salt water and labor in joy and sureness of heart for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven (who are, alas, a small minority); or that active, larger element which runs conventions and gets on the front page of newspapers and carries on works both large and good? If we are trying to define "The Church" we must include both elements; but the same words cannot be spoken of or to both. The members of former class, among whom are many young men, fully apprehend the mystical teaching and practice and, as fast as they can, give it to those who need it. The latter do not apprehend its value, have not themselves mastered its great messages, and do not understand the need for it.

They are immersed in the service side of religion, attending to what may be termed its "outgo" while leaving the "intake" clogged. Yet those very ones, with their close touch with the needs of humanity, would sympathize with many phases of "applied" mysticism.

Lumping together the two elements, for convenience, one may say that the first requisite for putting into application the mystical message is for the minister to accept it frankly and give it fearless exposition from time to time. This does not mean that he should give it precedence over all other points of view. To do so would be to make the same mistake which the new cults make. But, without becoming an extremist and without neglecting the majority of his congregation, whose needs are for a different teaching, perhaps he can, by giving frank and clear expression to his own conviction that health, happiness, and success are inherent privileges of the citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, give much aid and comfort to those in his congregation who are prepared for the mystical teaching and restrain many who would otherwise leave him either in body or in soul—for by far the worst drains on the church are not the actual losses, in physical numbers, but the loss of interest in its presentation of religion, and the centering of that interest somewhere else, so that the pulpit faces shells of men and women, who attend from habit, instead of those who rely on the written words for spiritual sustenance. This can be done without loss of the sympathy of that part of the congregation which is not prepared for the mystical message. They should know that some among them need it,

and, knowing this, will not take offense. This can be done, because it is being done constantly.

Again, prayer must be thoroughly understood as a dynamic and actual, tangible force and must be used in an organized, constant, and positive way. Results must be aimed at, achieved, and recorded. Failures must also be recorded and studied, that the reason for them may be discovered and then avoided. This is no more than any business house would do if it expected to accomplish things. How much more the church, with its unlimited possibilities of accomplishment, through its intimate connection with the greatest power that exists! The place where this prayer is carried on should be regarded as the power-house of the church, and those who give themselves to it as the most vital part of the working force of the church.

Secondly, the Sunday school should contain, in some degree, the teaching of power. Control of mind and, through it, the control to a large extent of circumstances should be taught to adolescent classes. If it is not taught there, where can it be properly taught? At present this valuable part of education, that which has made America's prosperity, is confined to the business schools, which give it full force. It should also be taught in the Sunday school, with the safeguards of religion around it so that it may not be a doctrine of the purely selfish use of force as now. The folly of fear, its destructive effect, its inconsistency with religion, may also be given to children at any age. It will not be necessary to change the existing routine of lessons. These ideas are a part of

religion and are found everywhere in the Bible.

Again, the sacraments, especially that of the Lord's Supper, are a neglected source of mystical inspiration. Protestantism, especially evangelical Protestantism, has reacted so far from the doctrine of the Real Presence that it has ceased to feel or to make the plain people in the pews feel any sort of presence at all except the ordinary appearance of the minister handling the elements. Just a little historical research, a little study of forgotten customs, origins, and symbols, would restore this most important sacrament to its rightful place as the very heart of the church—the fountainhead of its mystical life, as it was in apostolic days. These words are not written in a spirit of criticism; but surely in any democratic church a humble person in the pews may speak up and say that the administration of the sacraments in Protestant churches seems to him dry and lifeless and matter-of-fact, and that this rite does not help him to be well and happy, with a sense of renewed life, as it should. He cannot always bring his own inspiration to church ready-made, but must rely on finding some there.

Again, classes or weekly conferences for health can be held in any church, modeled on the Wednesday night conferences at Emanuel Church, Boston. Or, if the minister prefers a more conservative model, he will find it in the Class for Personal Religion at St. Paul's Cathedral, Boston. There are other experiments, conducted by consecrated men, equally worthy of study, if less well known. Conferences looking specially toward prosperity for men would

interest, hold, and help great numbers; and if called (so much depends on the terminology in all this) "spiritual efficiency classes" they might fit into the social work of churches which have institutional development. Such classes are held with practical and marked results in New York, though not under the auspices of any of the large denominations. Individual "treatment" (the word is bad from its associations) for healing, prosperity, or the overcoming of bad habits can be made part of the work of many a church, but it must be done by some person fitted by temperament and experience for it, some specialist who is willing to give up his life to this sort of thing; for it makes peculiar demands on the worker, and one who is fitted for it is unfitted for most other sorts of work. In the opinion of the writer this "clinic" idea of individual treatment is the last and most difficult application of this doctrine which can be made, because of the scarcity of people who can do it properly.

Any minister interested in this subject who finds his people sympathetically inclined will naturally consult the traditions of his own denomination. If he is a Methodist, he has a wealth of material ready to his hand in the simple faith of his people not yet wholly undermined by the counter-suggestions of this day and age. This he can build on, making it become more helpful to them instead of less so and, in so doing, build up his own faith, which probably needs it badly! Methodism is not wanting in organized agencies for the use of prayer as a dynamic, accountable force acting by law and not by chance; important

centers for this work exist in New York and Boston.

If the minister is an Episcopalian, he finds, of course, the way opened by the experiments already alluded to and by others and in the very traditions of his church, such as healing by unction, certain sacramental usages, and the use of symbols. On the other hand, he sometimes finds a very fixed conservatism and reluctance to use new terminology which is occasionally necessary, because progress demands new words adapted to modern needs.

These two great denominations have almost a monopoly of organized work in this field. Unitarians, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Congregationalists number, doubtless, many pure mystics among the laity and clergy, but one might venture the guess that more recruits go from them to Christian Science and New Thought than from the denominations previously named, because they offer slight opportunity for either the intake or the outgo necessary to the development of the mystical nature.

Again, there are exceptions to this rule, as, for instance, in the work of the Unitarians in their great "revival" movement of the past two years; and here and there Congregational and Presbyterian and Lutheran ministers—true mystics—are trying not to introduce the "Emanuel Movement," perhaps, but to graft a little of the new-old teaching on the old stock.

Roman Catholicism is, of course, firmly committed to the mystical practice and tradition. It believes in exorcism, divination, and divine healing—in short, in much that, a generation or two

ago, was called superstitious. However, all this is carefully guarded in actual practice by the discretionary powers of the local bishop. One might hazard a guess that this great church loses fewer communicants to the new cults than Protestant churches, owing to this provision for the needs of faith in its members, but it loses some because of the small use it makes of the powers vested in it.

One branch of the mystical teaching which could certainly be introduced into the most conservative church imaginable without shock or jar, one which is most fundamental, most rewarding in its effects, most easily taught and learned, is what may be described as the happiness teaching—the highly mystical sense of the great gladness underlying all sorrow.

The somewhat shallow optimism of a certain school has prejudiced some of us against this phase, but in reality it has a history and a literature worthy of all respect, and has exponents who rank high among the great minds who have given themselves to the elucidation of the mysteries of the spirit.

Many obscure ailments of mind and body are traceable to our habit of being sad when there is nothing in particular the matter. Surely, recharging the minds of men with joy would be a work not unworthy the only religion in which the note of joy is a dominant feature—Christianity.

The church that would take up and use the powerful, searching practice and teaching of mysticism must be elastic, adaptable, and observing; above all, it must so love men that it will have the subtle intuitions and insights into their inmost needs which love alone can give.